

Believing That We Need Each Other

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By Craig Wong

To those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind...so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift...God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. – The apostle Paul to the congregation in 1st century Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2-9)

In the opening of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he sings the praises of God's abundant grace upon His people, reminding them that they, *along with everyone who calls upon the name of Christ*, belong to one fellowship and therefore have been given everything they need. The problem is that the Corinthian believers were acting as if the opposite were true: they were divided by factions based on favored human leaders (e.g. "Paul," "Apollos," Cephas," etc.) in whom each placed their trust. The chagrined apostle must push back on them, and in no uncertain terms: "Is Christ *divided*? Was I crucified for you? Were you baptized in *my* name?" Paul must remind them that, from their inception, he came to them determined to know "only Christ and Him crucified." There is no need to *add* anything to the cross.

Sadly, our insistence on *adding* additional layers upon our identity in Christ (e.g. *I belong to the Democrats, I belong to the Republicans, I'm a religious progressive, I'm a libertarian, I listen to Breitbart, I listen to Fox, I listen to Huffington, I listen to NPR*, etc.) has produced seemingly-intractable divisions among us. Drawing such battle lines, we vilify each other as *out of touch, backwards, entitled, ignorant, deluded, racist, elitist, misguided*, or just plain *evil*. A word that one is unlikely to find on the list is the word *gift*, and yet this is precisely what the apostle is saying: in the body of Christ, you are rich with every spiritual gift you will ever need. And if what Paul says is true, then the fact of the matter is that *we need each other!*

The idea of "needing each other" eludes those of us who, truth be told, believe that we're better off keeping a safe distance. When we live this way, however, Satan has us exactly where he wants us. He wants the Church to remain

divided. He wants the gifts that we each bring, whether as individuals or as congregational bodies, to be withheld from one another, lest we gain a fuller picture of Christ, a greater unity, a more powerful witness.

When we live this way, however, Satan has us exactly where he wants us...divided.

Imagine if we stopped seeing each other as the enemy and embraced our shared calling in Christ. What could happen if we lowered our weapons, set aside our partisan identities (even for a moment), and chose to assume that how “the other” voted came out of the best of Christian intentions?

As I wrote this blog, my (left-leaning) eldest daughter, Kiana, came up to me and—totally unsolicited—shared with me a uncannily timely and uplifting story: “Dad, remember how I’ve been sharing about how awkward and tense my conversations have been with my (right-leaning) Pentecostal friend? Remember how one of us would start the conversation, it would get really uncomfortable, and then the other would eventually find a way to shut it down? Well, for the past week, we’ve been able to talk about all kinds of things—faith, church, politics—before class, after class, during our commute. We still don’t agree on lots of things, but we’re able to talk about anything now. We’re able to share about our lives, and encourage each other in our faith!”

In that moment, my daughter taught an important lesson. We won’t experience what it means to *need each other* unless we step out in faith, believing that we actually do.

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